

BOLIVIA CONFIRMS GUEVARA'S DEATH; BODY DISPLAYED

Army Reports Fingerprints
Prove Rebel Leader Was
Killed in Sunday Clash

CONFESSION DESCRIBED

He Made Himself Known and
Admitted Failure Before
He Died, General Says

By Reuters

VALLE GRANDE, Bolivia, Oct. 10 — The army high command officially confirmed today that Ernesto Che Guevara, the Latin revolutionary leader, was killed in a clash between guerrillas and Bolivian troops in southeastern Bolivia last Sunday.

The armed forces commander, Gen. Alfredo Ovando Candia, said Mr. Guevara had admitted his identity before dying of his wounds. General Ovando said at a news conference that the guerrilla leader had also admitted that he had failed in the seven-month-old guerrilla campaign he organized in Bolivia.

The identification of the body was made after fingerprinting by the Eighth Army command.

[United States officials in Washington reacted cautiously to the Bolivian reports that Mr. Guevara had been killed, but there was an increasing tendency to regard them as true.]

Arrives on Helicopter

The body was flown here yesterday, lashed to the landing runners of a helicopter that brought it from the mountain scene of the clash. The army said yesterday that it had received a report that Mr. Guevara had been killed near Higuera, but it declined immediate positive identification at the time.

After the body arrived here, dressed in bloody clothes, it was fingerprinted and embalmed.

[The Guevara fingerprints are on file with the Argentine federal police. As an Argentine citizen, Mr. Guevara was required to be fingerprinted to obtain a passport when he left his homeland in 1952. These official records have provided the basis for comparison with the fingerprints taken by the Bolivians from the body identified as that of Mr. Guevara.]

The scanty beard, shoulder-length hair and shape of the head resembled the features of Mr. Guevara as shown in earlier photographs of him. He was 39 years old.

An Englishman in the crowd, which except for the press was kept away at bayonet point, said that he had seen Mr. Guevara in Cuba and that he was

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"absolutely convinced" it was the long-sought revolutionary leader.

The body appeared to bear wounds in at least three places — two in the neck and one in the throat.

It was dressed in a green jacket with a zippered front, patched and faded green denim pants, green woolen socks and a pair of homemade moccasins.

A nun assisted doctors and intelligence men in preparing the body for display. After the work was finished, it was raised on a stretcher for the crowd to see.

The crowd appeared jubilant.

General Ovando Candia arrived from La Paz and immediately went to the officers' mess to pay his respect to the four soldiers killed in the clash.

The first news of the fight was brought to Valle Grande, 80 miles southwest of Santa Cruz, by Col. Joaquin Zenteno Anaya, commander of the Eighth Division.

He said that six other guerrillas had been killed in the clash and that their bodies would also be brought here. He said four of them were Cubans.

Mr. Guevara was a familiar bearded figure in olive green fatigues in Havana, where he was Minister of Industries before he dropped out of sight in March, 1965.

His whereabouts since has remained a mystery, leading to rumors that he had been killed in a dispute with Premier Fidel Castro and later that he was leading guerrillas in various parts of Latin America.

His name was linked with guerrilla activity in Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Bolivia.

Reports Are Discounted

On Sept. 10, the Bolivian President, René Barrientos Ortuño, described reports that Mr. Guevara was active in Bolivia as a myth. The next day he announced a \$5,000 reward for his capture dead or alive.

Reports published in the press here today said that a diary believed to have belonged to Mr. Guevara was in Army hands. These reports said that the diary had been found in a knapsack owned by the guerrilla leader.

Report Ignored in Havana

A non-Cuban informant, reached by telephone in Havana last night, said that officials of the Castro regime were regarding the reports of Mr. Guevara's death as unconfirmed and were declining to comment on them. The Cuban informant ignored the news, the informant said, adding: "My feeling is that the newspapers tomorrow won't publish a line."